

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

November 14, 2023

The Honorable Mike Johnson
Speaker of the House
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Hakeem Jeffries
Democratic Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Speaker Johnson and Leader Jeffries:

As members of the Congressional Renters Caucus, we write in advance of the looming lapse in funding on November 17 to emphasize the importance of fully funding and expanding support for federal rental assistance programs. Our nation is experiencing an acute housing crisis, and it is our responsibility to our constituents to ensure that rental assistance is available to all eligible individuals. As funding negotiations continue, **we urge you to reject effective cuts and instead significantly increase rental assistance funding to match substantial need nationwide.**

We founded the Congressional Renters Caucus to ensure that Americans have access to an adequate supply of safe, high quality, and affordable rental housing, remove barriers to renting, and expand federal rental assistance programs to ensure that all eligible households have access. Across the country our constituents often struggle to find affordable rental housing. Many of our members represent districts where well over half of households rent, and the steep increases in rents have had a devastating impact on the ability of households to maintain adequate housing, causing widespread housing insecurity and a nationwide homelessness emergency.

For the first time in recent history, the average American renter household is considered rent burdened, defined as spending more than 30% of income on housing costs¹. This is a product of rapidly rising rents, with the average median renter household income increasing only 4.3% in real terms since 2001, while median rent has increased a massive 18.8%, adjusting for inflation². Given this widening gap, the need for rental assistance is higher than ever even as existing federal funding has fallen far short in addressing the scope of the growing demand for federal rental assistance. The Center on Budget and Policy Priorities (CBPP) estimates that more than three quarters of households eligible for federal rental assistance programs do not receive benefits, including an estimated 75% of low-income renter households with children that are rent burdened, or live in overcrowded and/or substandard housing³.

The growing size of our nation's rental housing crisis demands immediate action to expand the inadequate support for rental assistance programs. However, we are deeply concerned that current FY2024 funding proposals would not only fail to meet this challenge but could lead to severe reductions in the already inadequate availability of federal rental assistance.

Merely maintaining federal rental assistance funding at current levels while rents continue to soar will result in fewer Americans being able to access federal rental assistance. Continuing Resolutions that provide no additional funds to adjust for the rising price of rental housing fail to meet the scope of this crisis or the needs of renters and result in severe cuts to rental assistance in real terms. We have similar concerns regarding the Senate proposal, which under the debt-ceiling compromise, offers only nominal increases and fails to keep up with

¹ <https://www.jchs.harvard.edu/blog/number-renters-burdened-housing-costs-reached-record-high-2021>

² <https://www.cbpp.org/renters-incomes-havent-caught-up-to-housing-costs>

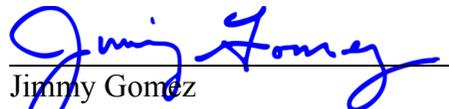
³ <https://www.cbpp.org/research/housing/three-out-of-four-low-income-at-risk-renters-do-not-receive-federal-rental-assistance>

growing rental costs. Under this proposal CBPP estimates that the Housing Choice Voucher Program would be funded at \$74.5 million below the President's request and serve an estimated 6,000 fewer families.

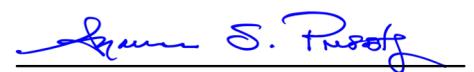
We are deeply alarmed by even weaker support for federal rental assistance proposed in House Republican FY24 legislation, which not only shows an apparent unwillingness to honor the debt ceiling agreement but proposes what effectively amount to deep cuts to federal rental assistance compared to increased costs for existing assistance. These effective cuts would supercharge the housing crisis, resulting in an estimated 40,000 fewer households able to access Section 8 vouchers alone. Equally concerning is a proposal to cut \$151 million dollars from public housing, which is in desperate need of additional funding to improve quality and habitability and serves essential bulwark against unaffordable and undersupplied private market. We urge you to reject these extreme proposals that would contribute to the growing unaffordability of rent nationwide and represent a catastrophic slashing of resources for at risk households that need them most.

Finally, it cannot be stressed enough that the impacts of a prolonged, unmitigated lapse in funding would be devastating to federal rental assistance and at-risk communities and must be avoided. **Congress must take action to address our affordable housing crisis by ensuring that federal rental assistance meets the needs of renters.** We urge you to reject any cuts to rental assistance and instead significantly increase funding for these programs, tackling the root causes of widespread housing insecurity and the homelessness crisis. As members of the Congressional Renters Caucus, we thank you for your attention to this critical issue and look forward to working with you to ensure all Americans have access to safe, high quality, and affordable rental housing.

Sincerely,


Jimmy Gomez
Member of Congress


Ritchie Torres
Member of Congress


Ayanna Pressley
Member of Congress



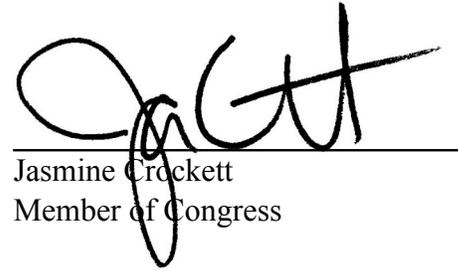
Barbara Lee
Member of Congress



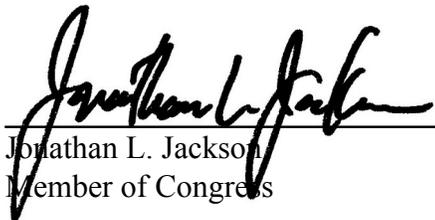
Grace F. Napolitano
Member of Congress



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Jasmine Crockett
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Ro Khanna
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Danny K. Davis
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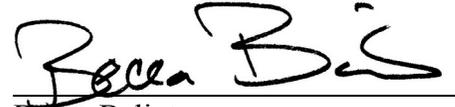
Robin L. Kelly
Member of Congress



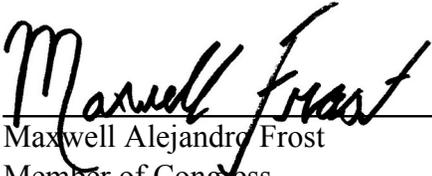
Gwen S. Moore
Member of Congress



Kevin Mullin
Member of Congress



Becca Balint
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Maxwell Alejandro Frost
Member of Congress



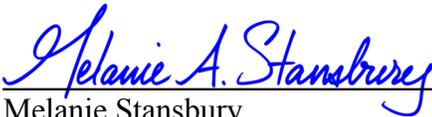
Dan Goldman
Member of Congress



Raúl M. Grijalva
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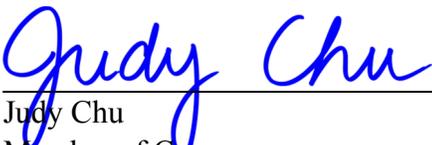
Rashida Tlaib
Member of Congress



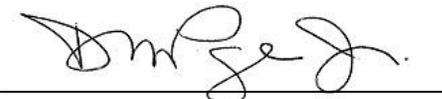
Melanie Stansbury
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Bonnie Watson Coleman
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